

Why there is Parliamentary Procedure

Do you remember a time in which you joined a conversation among several people? In that group was an individual or two who seemed to do all the talking. It was difficult, if not impossible, for you to make a statement, state your ideas or participate in any way. Consider what would happen if instead of joining a conversation, you were attending a meeting at which some goal or objective was to be accomplished. How would you feel if you were unable to state your view? Parliamentary procedure makes it possible for you, or anyone to be heard. Parliamentary procedure is an organized way in which the smallest minority (even just one person) can be heard, while preserving the right of the majority to prevail. Think of the difficulties of conducting business to arrive at a decision if parliamentary procedure is not used. And think of how short, productive and easy business meetings become when Parliamentary procedure is used. It is important for leaders and members alike to know how to conduct business meetings. What are the rules of Parliamentary Procedure? One of the oldest and most popular set is Robert's Rules of Order. It is the set of rules used by most legislative bodies. Most of the time meetings are small groups and issues are not contentious. In these cases only a few simple rules are needed. Often consensus (another method of conducting meetings) can be used to arrive at a decision. But if a decision is to be made on a difficult issue, it becomes necessary to strictly follow Robert's Rules.

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Presenting a Motion

A motion is a formal way of getting an idea, proposal or plan of action before a group. Motions are part of the orderly way of conducting a meeting. Motions call for discussion and action by the group. The steps in presenting a motion are:

1. **Rise and Address the Chair**

A member wishing to present an item of business, discuss a motion, ask a question or give information related to the subject must first address the presiding officer. The member will say “Mr. President” or “Madame President” or “Mr. Chairman,” or use a special title if he or she has one, but never use a personal name.

In small, informal groups, the person who wants to be recognized will not need to stand to address the Chair.

2. **Recognition by the Chair**

The Chair recognizes the person by calling his or her name (“Bill,” “Mary,” “Mr. Smith”) or by nodding. If the member is not known by the Chair or group, then he or she should state full name and organization. (“Mr. President,” “Jim Jones,” “4-H Delegate,” “Clover Club.”) The floor is assigned to the member rising or addressing the Chair first, the exception being that the maker of the motion is entitled to speak first, if he or she wishes. After the person is recognized he or she is free to speak.

3. **Make the Motion**

The person recognized by the Chair makes a motion by saying, “I move that” or “I propose that....” or “I move the adoption of” Any other wording is incorrect.

4. Second the Motion

All ordinary motions must be seconded. This is to show the group that two people want the subject discussed. A motion should receive a second soon after it is made. If it does not receive a second, the motion is dead and cannot be acted upon by the group. The member wishing to second the motion does not have to be recognized by the Chair. In large formal meetings it is proper to stand and say, "Mr. Chairman or Madame Chairman I second the motion." In small groups, the member wishing to second the motion does not need to stand but says, "I second the motion" or "I second it."

5. Statement of Question

Before a motion is voted on by the group, the Chair will restate the motion. The motion is restated so that everyone understands before they begin discussing.

6. Discussion (Debate) of Motion

The president then opens the floor for discussion or debate on the motion "The motion (question) is now open for discussion (debate or remarks)." Or "Is there any discussion?" Any member of the group has the right to discuss the motion after they being recognized by the Chair. All discussion must be about the motion or the speaker can be ruled out of order by the president.

7. Putting the Question (Voting)

After the members have discussed the motion, the president “puts the question to a vote.” The president will say “Are you ready for the question?” (pause to see if someone still wishes to discuss the question) If not, the chair restates the question and asks for the vote. Both the affirmative (aye) and negative (no) votes must be taken. The president will say, “All those in favor of the motion that..., say “Aye.” All those opposed say, “Nay.”

If the vote is close, the president or one of the members may call for a count. The president will then ask members to raise their hands or stand for the vote.

8. Results of the Vote

The Chair always announces whether the motion was adopted or lost and the results of the vote. Action on a motion is not legally complete until this is done.

“The motion is adopted that...” or “The motion that...is lost.”

Once the results have been announced by the president, the group can deal with another motion or other matters of business.

Remember -- it is:

- A motion when introduced.
- A question when being considered.
- An order, a vote or a decision when adopted.

Other Pertinent Rules about Motions

1. Only one main motion may be on the floor at one time. It must be postponed, sent to committee, or voted on before another main motion can be made. A motion to postpone or to send to committee is not a main motion and can be offered to clear a main motion from the floor. Motions to postpone or to send to a committee require a majority vote to pass.
2. With the approval of the members who made and seconded a motion, it can be withdrawn from the floor without a vote.
3. If a motion doesn't receive a second, it dies (is no longer considered).
4. If debate on a main motion drags on and on, any member may call for the vote:

The motion to call the previous question may not be debated and requires a 2/3 majority to pass. If it passes, a vote is taken immediately on the main motion.

After an amendment has been offered, seconded, and discussed, **only the amendment is voted on.** After it passes, the main motion must be voted on as amended. If the amendment fails, the main motion must be voted on as originally stated.

Rules of Debate

Debate is the discussion, during a meeting, of the various merits or demerits of the pending question. Since one of the principles of parliamentary procedure is based on the rights of all, there are certain rules to preserve these rights and to ensure that all can have their opinions heard, but still be able to conduct business in a minimum amount of time.

Rules of debate are:

1. Only one subject or item of business can be before the group at one time. No new item of business can be introduced or discussed until the one being discussed is voted on.
2. The maker of the motion is entitled to speak first.
3. Each member who has been recognized, may speak no more than ten minutes at a time. When a member's time has expired, the Chair rises and calls his or her attention to the fact.
4. Each member is allowed to speak only twice on the same question.

To ensure that members remain courteous during debate, there are certain rules of decorum when debating:

- Limit remarks to merits of the pending question.
- Refrain from attacking a member's motives.
- Address all remarks through the chair. Do not talk directly to another member.
- Avoid using the member's name, say "The Member."
- Do not talk about a previous action that is not now pending.
- Although you may vote against your own motion, do not speak against it.
- Get permission to read from reports, quotations, etc.
- Be seated if interrupted by the Chair.
- Do nothing that will disturb the other members while debate is going on.

The Chair and Debate

Although the Chair is a member of the organization and has full membership rights of debate, he or she must be impartial. He or she should refrain from debating if possible. If the Chairman feels he or she must speak on a pending question, he or she should relinquish the Chair to someone else, usually the Vice-President. He or she does not resume the Chair until the vote is taken.

Methods of Voting

The following examples are proper procedures for putting the question.

- **VIVA VOCE (VOICE VOTE)** – saying “aye” (affirmative) or “nay” (negative) when the question is put by the chair.
Chair: All those in favor say “aye.” (pause) Those opposed, say “nay.”
The chair should always state what happened to the motion as the result of the vote:
“The ayes have it, the motion is adopted and we will sell Christmas Ornaments.”
- **SHOW OF HANDS** – Recommended for use in small meetings in place of voice vote or to verify a voice vote.
“All those in favor will raise their right hand. Please lower hands.”
“All those opposed, please raise their right hand.”

RISING VOTE – To verify a voice vote, when in doubt, and to verify vote on motions requiring a two-thirds vote. A two-thirds vote should be a rising vote.

Chair: “The Chair is in doubt. Those in favor of the motion to...will please rise. Be seated. “Those opposed will please rise. Be seated.” “There being a majority in the affirmative the motion is adopted and we will....” OR

“There being two-thirds in the affirmative, the motion is adopted and we will....” OR “There being less than two-thirds in the affirmative the motion is lost and we will not ...”

- **BALLOT VOTE (Secret Vote)** – This involves writing a vote on a slip of paper supplied by tellers (appointed by the Chair). This method should be used only if provided for in the bylaws or ordered by the assembly. A secret ballot is a good way to vote for officers, elect special delegates, etc.

Motions

There are five types of motions that are discussed in the following pages. They are privileged, incidental, subsidiary, main and unclassified.

Privileged motions Motions which do not relate to the pending question but have to do with matters of such urgency or importance that, without debate, they are allowed to interrupt the consideration of anything else.

Call for Orders of the Day – to keep meeting to program order of business

Question of Privilege – bring up urgent matter- concerning noise, discomfort, ect.

Take a Recess – to temporarily stop the meeting

Adjourn – to end the meeting

Set the Next Meeting Date – of the next business meeting

Incidental motions Motions which deal with questions of procedure and arise out of another pending motion or item of business. With the exception of the motion to appeal from the ruling of the chair, they are not debatable.

Division of the House - asking for the vote to be counted again.

Division of the Question - If too many items are being considered in one motion this request allows them to look at those independently.

Appeal from the Decision of the Chair - if the chairperson rules unfairly on a point of order a member may appeal the decision

Withdraw a Motion - to prevent a motion from being voted, on only the maker of the motion can withdraw it or change it

Point of Order - to enforce the rules

Objection to the Consideration of the Question - to avoid questions that are irrelevant

Suspend the rules - allows the group to take action that is prohibited by the rules

Subsidiary motions Motions which assist the assembly in treating or disposing of a main motion. They have the effect of hastening action upon, delaying action upon, or modifying the main motion.

Amendments - changing the main motions so that it is more agreeable

Lay a Motion on the Table - to temporarily postponed the motion being considered

The Previous Question - to stop debate in order to devote immediately on the motion that's being considered

Postpone to a Certain Time - to defer action

Postpone Indefinitely - to reject a motion being considered when the vote for it is uncertain

Refer to a Committee - to have the question being considered be more thoroughly investigated

Main motion- the bases of all parliamentary procedure, a formal way of getting an idea, a proposal, or plan of action before the group.

Unclassified motions

Reconsider - the purpose of this motion is to bring an item of business back before the group for discussion and another vote

Take from the Table - brings an original motion back to the club in the form in which it was tabled

Reconsider and Have entered on the Minutes - this is used when it is desire to prevent the action on the main motion from becoming final until another meeting or another day. This is to prevent a temporary unrepresentative majority from carrying out an action it is believed the majority will not approve

Rescind – to not reconsider the vote upon a motion, but to cancel the action formerly taken upon it

ADDENDUM

Privileged Motions Motions which do not relate to the pending question but have to do with matters of such urgency or importance that, without debate, they are allowed to interrupt the consideration of anything else.

To Adjourn

This motion takes precedence over all other parliamentary questions. However, there are some times when a motion to adjourn is out of order:

- While another member has the floor.
- When a privileged motion to .x the time to which adjourn is pending.
- While a motion to reconsider is being made, to be entered on the minutes for future action.
- While verifying a vote.
- While the chairperson is stating a question.
- After the motion to adjourn has been lost.

The motion cannot be renewed until after some business or debate has been conducted. Before moving to adjourn, a member must have recognition from the chairperson.

The motion must be seconded and cannot be amended or debated.

Incidental Motions Motions which deal with questions of procedure and arise out of another pending motion or item of business. With the exception of the motion to appeal from the ruling of the chair, they are not debatable.

Division of the House

The object of calling for a division of the house is to count the vote again. A member may call for a division after the president has announced the outcome of a vote when the count is not definite, like when using a voice vote. The member does not need to be recognized or stand when calling for a division of the house. The president then calls for the vote using a show of hands or some other definite method.

Division of the Question

The object of the division of the question is to avoid voting on too many independent questions at one time. If a motion consists of two or more independent items of business, connected by conjunctions, it may be best to consider them separately since the club may wish to adopt only part of them. The request for the division of the motion may be made by an individual or it may be by motion. An individual makes the request by saying, "I call for a division of the motion." If the request is in the form of a motion it must be seconded, it is not debatable, it may be amended, it requires majority vote, and it may not be reconsidered.

Appeal from the Decision of the Chairperson

If the chairperson rules unfavorably on a point of order, an appeal may be made from the decision of the chairperson if the member still feels he or she is correct.

Without waiting to be recognized by the chairperson, the member rises as soon as the decision is made, even though another member has the floor.

To Withdraw a Motion

The object of withdrawing a motion is to prevent the vote and keep the motion off the records. It does not require a second, is not debatable, and cannot be amended. It requires a majority vote. Before a motion has been stated by the chairperson, its maker may withdraw or change it as suggested. If changed, the second may be withdrawn. The president can offer help to younger members to improve their motion before he or she restates it to present it for discussion. After a motion has been restated by the president it belongs to the assembly. It may then be withdrawn or changed only if there is no objection or if the assembly, by a majority vote, permits it. Any motion may be withdrawn.

Point of Order (Incidental)

The purpose of raising a point of order is to enforce the rules. It does not require a second. It is not debatable, except the chairperson may seek the advice of the club. It may not be amended. When submitted to the club, it requires a majority vote and may not be reconsidered.

Objection to the Consideration of the Question

The purpose of an objection to the consideration of the question is to avoid questions that are unprofitable and irrelevant. It does not require a second, is not debatable, may not be amended, requires a two-thirds negative vote, and may be reconsidered.

To Suspend the Rules

The object of suspending rules is to allow the club to take action that is prohibited by the rules. The rules may be suspended by general consent, but if even one member objects, a motion must be made and passed by a two-thirds vote. A motion to suspend the rules requires a second, is not debatable, cannot be amended, requires a two-thirds vote, and cannot be reconsidered. The rules are suspended for a single purpose, as the motion states, and no other business may be transacted under the suspension. After the motion to suspend the rules has carried, the member who made the motion has the first right to the floor to make a motion or discuss it.

The following rules may be suspended:

- To adopt a question without debate.
- To take a question from the table when the motion to do so is not in order.
- To take up a question before the time to which it has been postponed.
- To make a special order.

- To take action contrary to standing rules.

For example, previously, the Council passed a motion to lay on the table until the next regular meeting the motion by a member. This motion can be taken off the table before the scheduled time by suspending the rules in order for the motion to be voted on immediately.

The following cannot be suspended:

- The constitution can never be suspended, nor can the bylaws.
- No rule protecting absentees can be suspended, nor can a rule requiring that a vote be taken by ballot be suspended.
- Nothing that requires previous notice and a two-thirds vote for its amendment can be suspended by less than a two-thirds vote.
- No rule can be suspended when the negative vote is as large as the minority protected by the rule.

Subsidiary Motions Motions which assist the assembly in treating or disposing of a main motion. They have the effect of hastening action upon, delaying action upon, or modifying the main motion.

Amending the Main Motion

The object of amending the main motion is to change it so that it is more agreeable. It requires a second, is debatable, requires a majority vote, and can be reconsidered

An amendment may be stated in many ways, including the following: I move to amend by inserting the word or words “___” before the word “___.” ... striking out the word or words “___.” ... striking out the word or words “___” and inserting “___.” ... substituting the motion “___” for the motion “___” If the amendment passes, the main motion becomes the motion as amended. If it fails, the main motion is unaffected.

To Lay a Motion on the Table

The object of the motion to lay on the table is to temporarily postpone the pending business. It is not debatable and requires a second. It may not be amended, requires a majority vote, and may not be reconsidered.

Discuss this parliamentary problem fully and point out that a question tabled and not taken from the table at the same or the following meeting is lost. Also explain that “tabling” should not be used by a minority as a means for defeating a motion. The following motions cannot be laid on the table:

- Adjournment
- To lay on the table
- Questions as to priority of business
- To take from the table

The Previous Question

To stop debate and order an immediate vote on a question, the correct procedure is to say, “I move the previous question.” This motion, when seconded and carried by a two-thirds vote, stops discussion and forces an immediate vote. It requires a second, is not debatable, may not be amended, and may be reconsidered. Calling “Question” does not compel the chairperson to take the vote, nor does it stop discussion.

To Postpone to a Certain Time

The object of postponing is to defer action. It requires a second and is debatable, and may be reconsidered. This motion is debatable to a certain extent. If passed, it becomes unfinished business for the next meeting. A question may not be postponed beyond the next regular meeting. A motion may not be taken up before the time to which it was postponed except by reconsideration, suspension of the rules, or general consent.

To Postpone Indefinitely

The object of postponing a motion indefinitely is to reject the main motion when the strength of the vote for it is uncertain. It requires a second, majority vote, and cannot be amended. If the motion to postpone fails, it may not be renewed or reconsidered and the main motion comes back to its original form, can be amended and have all other privileges of a main motion. If the postponement passes, the main motion is rejected for the present meeting unless the vote is reconsidered during the present or next business session.

To Refer to a Committee

The object of referring to a committee is to commit or recommend to a standing or special committee a question that may be more carefully investigated and put into better shape for the club to consider than can be done in the club itself.

Unclassified Motions

Motion to Reconsider

The object of a motion to reconsider is to bring an item of business back before the group for discussion and another vote. It requires a second. It is debatable if the motion to be reconsidered is a candidate for debate. It may not be amended, requires majority vote, and must be introduced by a member who voted on the winning side. It may not be reconsidered.

A simple majority is required to reconsider a motion, regardless of the vote necessary to adopt the motion to be reconsidered. After discussion, the vote is taken again. It may be either a majority vote or two-thirds, depending on the type of motion being reconsidered.

To Take From the Table

To take from the table is to bring the question before the club again. It requires a second, is not debatable, requires a majority vote, cannot be amended, and cannot be reconsidered.

If the motion to take from the table is lost, it can be put before the same meeting after some other business has been transacted. A question laid on the table must be taken up and disposed of during the meeting following that during which it was tabled; otherwise the motion dies.

If the motion to take from the table carries, the original motion comes back to the club in the form in which it was tabled. The original motion may be debated and then put before the house in the regular motion procedure and either passed or voted down.

To Reconsider and Have Entered on the Minutes

The procedure to reconsider and have entered on the minutes is used when it is desired to prevent the action on the main motion from becoming final until another meeting or another day. It is to prevent a temporary and unrepresentative majority from carrying out an action it is believed the majority will not approve. As the motion to reconsider and have entered on the minutes may be made only by one who voted on the winning side, a member desiring to make the motion should vote with the majority even though opposed to its action.

Having the motion placed on the minutes gives opponents of the motion a chance to get their supporters to attend the next meeting. It requires only a majority vote.

To Rescind a Motion

The purpose of the motion to rescind or repeal is not to reconsider the vote upon a motion, but to cancel the action formerly taken upon it.

A motion previously made and voted on may be reconsidered the day it was voted on or the following meeting day. After that, the motion to rescind is in order, but a motion to reconsider is out of order.

The motion to rescind may be applied to the vote on all main motions, questions of privileges, and appeals. A motion to rescind is not in order if, as a result of a vote, something has been done that cannot be undone, a resignation has been acted upon, or a member has been elected to or expelled from membership or office and has been notified of the fact.

If a motion is to be rescinded, notice must be given at a preceding meeting or in the call for the meeting; or if such notice has not been given, a two-thirds vote of those voting or a majority vote of the entire membership is necessary. If notice is given, a regular majority vote is required.

Main Motion - is the basis of all parliamentary procedure
A motion is a formal way of getting an idea, proposal or plan of action before a group. Motions are part of the orderly way of conducting a meeting. Motions call for discussion and action by the group.

Parliamentary Procedure Manual The Pennsylvania State 4 -H Council

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